

I, Matt Gerdes, declare as follows.

1. I have been an active BASE jumper since 1997. I was introduced to BASE Jumping by Frank Gambalie in the winter of 1997. Since then I have accumulated over 1200 injury free BASE jumps in locations from Baffin Island in the Canadian arctic, Southeast Asia, the Alps, and the western United States.
2. I am the author of The Great Book of BASE, which details many of the technical aspects of BASE jumping and the development of the sport. BASE jumping is a highly technical sport. Proper preparation is key and requires extensive training as a parachutist and knowledge of specialized equipment. I do not consider myself to be a reckless or unprepared jumper, nor do I consider myself to be a scofflaw.
3. Through my research and participation in the sport I have been deeply involved with the broader BASE jumping community for many years. I have personally known several in our community who have been arrested or killed in Yosemite National Park, including Dean Potter, Graham Hunt, and Frank Gambalie.
4. Throughout my BASE jumping career I have often asked the obvious question of why it was “illegal” to BASE jump in Yosemite National Park when so much other recreation occurs there daily. Through conversations with many BASE jumpers, including jumpers older than myself, and Park Rangers, I learned that permits were no longer being issued early in my BASE jumping career, and that permits had not been issued for many years. This was always described to me as a hard and fast rule, but with little explanation.
5. Furthermore, the fervor with which BASE jumpers are pursued by rangers in Yosemite was, even twenty years ago, world famous. The dynamic between BASE jumpers and rangers did not in any way resemble people who had failed to get a recreation permit – it always has been more along the lines of cops and robbers. BASE jumpers assume that the Rangers are out to get them, as though it is a personal vendetta, and always assume that any BASE jumping in the park will be met with hostility.
6. Over the years so many permits have been denied, so many jumpers arrested, and so much violence and injury have resulted from BASE jumpers trying to avoid rangers that it would never even occur to a modern day BASE jumper to apply for a permit. In my experience with the BASE jumping community, the prevailing wisdom is that one would be far more likely to win the lottery or get struck by lightning while being eaten by a shark than to ever have a permit issued to BASE jump in Yosemite. Apart from the fact that people do still actually win the lottery.
7. The understanding that Yosemite National Park will never issue a BASE jumping permit has led many BASE jumpers to take unnecessary risks, parachuting in marginal conditions, such as low light at dusk or dawn, or being driven into dangerous or even fatal situations to avoid the Rangers.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

March 6 2023



Matt Gerdes